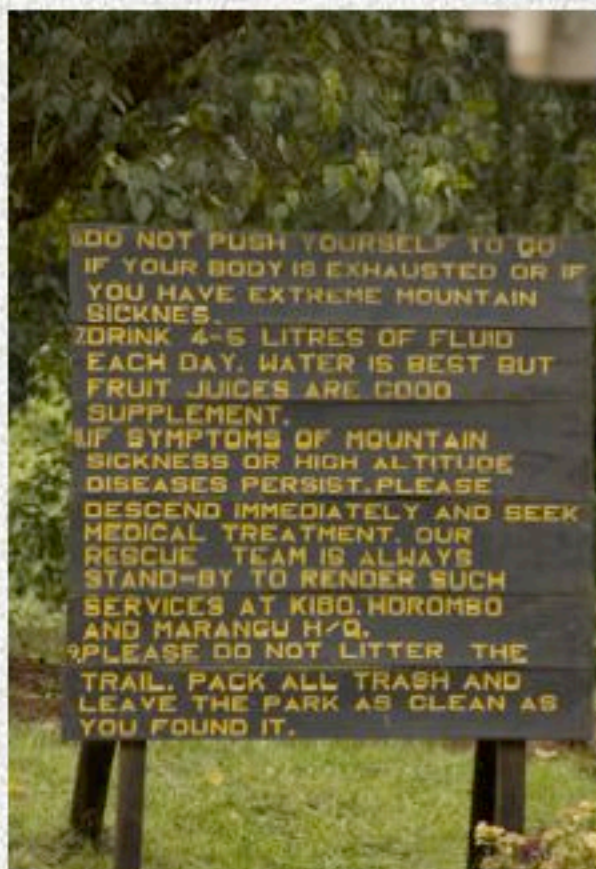


KILIMANJARO 2010



Something we all have in common here at Amazon Lily is our enjoyment in setting goals and challenges and then working our butts off to achieve them. My most recent goal was to climb and summit Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

After many months of lunging, squatting, stairs, leg press and weekend hill walks, I flew to Nairobi to make my way to the base of Killi. Covered in cloud, I was unable to get a good look at the 5895m monster that I had set out to conquer. After meeting up with the 13 other keen hikers, (including Sharon Coates – regular A.L friend) and our guides and porters we checked in at the front gates, read the warning signs and started our hike through the gorgeous rain forest. The hike to the summit took us 5 1/2 days. We walked through beautiful rainforest (yes it rained), dusty plains, boulder strewn terrain, deep fresh snow and amazing glaciers. There were challenges every day, from wet gear, altitude sickness, gastro, sunburn, colds, dehydration and injuries, but our group managed to battle through it all to make Barafu Huts, our final camp before summit.

After having dinner at 5pm we went to bed to try and nap for a few hours before rising again at 10pm to begin our summit attempt. We emerged from our tents to discover it had started to snow.

More layers were added to our bodies, before nervously heading to the meals tent to meet up with everyone. Lots of quiet murmurs, last minute gear checks, concerned looks at the sky, and a final guzzle of tea before packs were put on, and we were on our way. Increased snow, howling winds and freezing temperatures kept our group very quiet. Eating was unappealing, and drinking was impossible after the water froze. We battled on, walking at an angle, with heads down, to keep the wind and snow out of our faces. A short rest at 6am, was accompanied by a brief view of sunrise. Onwards we went to finally push up a very steep section to take us to Stella Point and the crater rim. Six of us waited there for 20 minutes for the rest of the group to catch up. Two more arrived, before we concluded that if we were ever going to summit, now was the time to go. A quick bite to eat for those who could stomach it, and a search to see if anyone's water hadn't frozen, then we were off again for the final ascent.

Altitude was making breathing difficult, so it was a slow pace set for that final 1 1/4 hrs. Head down and focused on staying warm and keeping our feet, we were finally rewarded with our first glimpse of the sign post announcing Uhuru Peak 5895m. With a sense of joy and achievement I hadn't felt since Kokoda my goal was reached. All that was left was to get the camera out, snap the all important photo and begin the long descent.

Killimanjaro was a wonderful experience that I would highly recommend and plan on repeating. The people, scenery, culture and experience all meshed together for an adventure that will be very hard to top. Although there were members of our group that did not reach the summit, I admire every single one of them for their non stop good spirit, determination and courage to get as far as they did.

- Meagan Love

